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For Immediate Release
2008AE0004-000097
Jan. 25, 2008

Ministry of Advanced Education

$304K WILL BUILD LANGARA CAMPUS GATHERING PLACE

VANCOUVER – The Province is providing Langara College with $304,000 to build a gathering place that will enhance support services for the growing number of young Aboriginal students at the campus, Vancouver-Langara MLA Carole Taylor announced today.

"This new space at Langara College will serve as a source of pride in Aboriginal culture and history for all those who visit," said Taylor.

Up to $15 million will be provided for Aboriginal gathering places at public post-secondary institutions over the next three years. Besides Langara College, the first round of funding includes Okanagan College, Kwantlen University College, the College of the Rockies, Northern Lights College and the College of New Caledonia. The funding is part of the Province's $65-million strategy to help Aboriginal students start, stay in and succeed in post-secondary education.

"We are breaking down the barriers that have prevented so many of our Aboriginal people from being all they can be," Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell said. "At the same time, we're helping our province meet skills shortages by making sure the growing number of young Aboriginal people in B.C. have the knowledge and skills to build great careers."

Langara's gathering place will be developed in the new student union building, which is to begin construction next month. The gathering place is expected to be finished in December 2009.

"Together with the students' union, Langara is creating a culture-rich, multi-purpose space that celebrates Aboriginal culture," college president Linda Holmes said. "The college is very pleased that the ministry is providing funds to support this development of an area where various artistic pieces will welcome visitors to the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, thus raising awareness, instilling pride of accomplishment, and inspiring learning about the Aboriginal culture."

More than 17,200 First Nation, Métis and Inuit students attended B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions in 2007, an increase of more than 16 per cent since 2002. However, according to B.C. Statistics, a non-Aboriginal person is five times as likely to have a university degree as an Aboriginal person living on reserve, and almost three times more likely than an Aboriginal person off reserve.

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Improving quality and choice in education is a key pillar of the Province's Pacific Leadership Agenda. The gathering places funding also supports the government's commitments through the Transformative Change Accord and the Métis Nation Relationship Accord to close the gaps by 2015 in education, health, housing, and economic opportunities that separate Aboriginal British Columbians from other residents.

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Media contact: Gordon Williams
Communications Director
250 952-6508
250 413-7316 (cell)

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